journey

APRIL 1985

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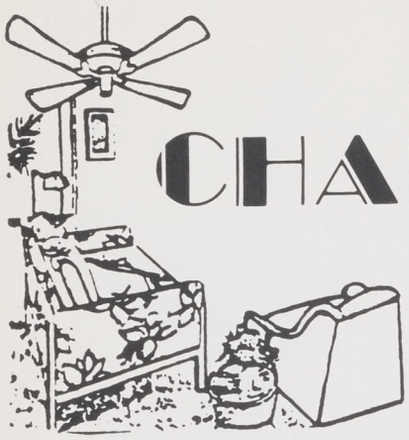

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

by Nancy Radclyffe

Senior Chaplain

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER
ARE YOU YOUR PASTOR'S KEEPER

Have you ever taken the time of a clergyperson, because of his/her position as clergy? If so, you have a responsibility to provide for the physical, emotional, spiritual well-being of the one whom God has chosen to be your spiritual leader. This is true whether you individually took that time or were part of a group who took it and whether it was once or repeatedly. Yes, the board of directors should lead the way in this but you are to be actively involved and can initiate such concern if they do not.

Pastors, as well as other clergy in active ministry, give out a great deal of their energy, strength and even spirit. Part of their call is one of literally giving themselves. Some of you lay people know exactly what I mean because your calls involve this kind of giving. Refreshment must come from God and you are integral to seeing that there is time in the lives of God's chosen for this to occur.

There is one area where this excess giving is more easily described. It is that pastoral people are "on call" and try to be available for the emergencies in the lives of congregational people. This easy access to the pastor results in the handling of many life events which are not true emergencies (as well as those which are) in the "off" hours. This frequent invasion of private space means that time which would appear to be available for restoration often is not.

Pastors need built-in, guaranteed times to be "off" with the knowledge that their peace will not be interrupted except in extreme emergency. Each individual can help provide it by being aware of the day and hour of each call to the pastor. Is it a day off? Is it evening or other hours of off time? Is it vacation, retreat or sick time off? If the answer to any of these is "yes" then re-think your call. Can she or he really do anything about it right then? Is it a question that can wait until later? Is it a problem which will still be here tomorrow whether or not you talk to her/him tonight?

Yes, I know many of life's tribulation--a break up, an ill parent, an argument with a deacon--are very difficult to manage by oneself even for a few hours. Instead of giving into the impulse to call the pastor, try putting it in God's hands, at least overnight. I continue to be amazed at how well God can meet my every need. A simple prayer of, "God, I just can't deal with this tonight. You take it and just put me to sleep. Thank you. Good night," has resulted in more than one good night's sleep or day of peace. Sometimes, the problem has even been resolved by the time I call the person with whom I feel I need to talk. Try it, you will like the results and your pastor will have time to rebuild creative energy.

Churches as whole also have a responsibility for providing for times of refreshment. The board of directors and/or congregational meeting needs to spell out paid holidays (at least 12 a year), retreat time, vacation, sick and personal leave time. It is amazing how often pastors receive calls about holy unions, church schedule, etc. not to mention personal need calls on New Year's Day, Fourth of July, President's Day, Memorial Day, etc. Yes, these will sometimes be Sundays or other planned worship days and then another day is given off instead of the actual holiday.

Pastors, assistant pastors and all active clergy need time for just retreating which are not to be confused with conferences. A minimum of 12 paid retreat days a year should be clearly spelled out. As for paid vacation, a person who gives so much of their very being, should be given at least four weeks a year. No less than one of those weeks are to be available as early as four months after beginning a position. If you want your church to thrive never require any pastoral person to wait a full year before being able to take retreat or vacation time. Further, insist that they take such time at frequent intervals.

Paid sick leave is a minimum of 14 days a year with an understanding that this can be extended in case of serious accident or illness. Personal leave days are usually given for professionals on an honor basis but may be specified at three to seven per year.

In looking at paid time off, remember, pastoral

journey

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All materials submitted to JOURNEY must be inclusive of gender, age and race. The Editor will modify any language not meeting these criteria.

Honorary Doctorate of Ministries

This is Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson's year for recognition for her years of ministry in UFMCC and the Gay/Lesbian community at large. In January she received the first Lazarus Project Award from the Lazarus Project in Los Angeles for enabling reconciliation between the religious and Gay and Lesbian community.

Samaritan College was directed to bestow an Honorary Doctorate of Ministries degree upon the Reverend Wilson at the 1985 commencement. The Samaritan Management Team unanimously passed the following resolution:

"The Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson has faithfully served the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches as pastor, Elder, and Clerk of the Board of Elders for over 10 years. She has provided exceptional leadership in helping to either create and/or direct numerous Fellowship ministries including the ministries of the Department of Ecumenical Relations, Third World Ministries Department, and the various ministries to women. She has served Samaritan Educational Ministries as both a Management Team member and liaison Elder. For seven years she has generously shared her exceptional gifts for teaching with Samaritan College by offering courses every year. She unfailingly has given her loving support both privately and publicly to Samaritan College.

"In recognition of her exceptional service in God's ministry, we, the Samaritan Management Team, direct Samaritan College to bestow upon the Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, in accordance with the state code of education of California, the degree of HONORARY DOCTORATE OF MINISTRY at the commencement ceremonies in 1985."

All are invited to send letters of congratulations to Samaritan College. These letters will be assembled in an album and presented to Nancy Wilson at commencement.

Graduation is Friday, May 31.

SAMARITAN COLLEGE
3327 Beverly Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA. 90004
(213) 387-8086

Rev. Sherre Boothman, Dean of Samaritan, announces the awarding of a Doctorate of Ministries Degree to Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson. Rev. Elder Troy Perry, last year's recipient joins in the celebration. A reception in Wilson's honor was held at the Fellowship Offices.

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COVER: Pat Hayman

How discrimination works so you don't

PART I
THE MYTH OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY
by Marianne Van Fossen

Equal Opportunity is, on the whole, a myth. While there are many firms that do attempt to make employment opportunities available to a variety of people, many do not. Instead, they discriminate against Third World People, Lesbians, Gay men, etc. by using subtle, permanent employment agencies.

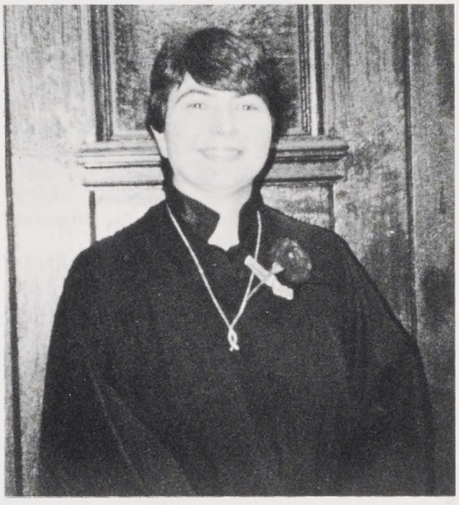
I have spent several years in the employment industry, encountering racist practices regularly at temporary and permanent personnel agencies. I did work for one or two firms that refused to discriminate, but they are in the minority. Many companies who choose to be racist, sexist, or heterosexist pay agencies to "screen" applicants or temporary employees according to a variety of criteria, some of which discriminate subtly or directly against men, women, Black people, Gays and Lesbians, depending upon the prejudices of the employer. Since the agencies depend upon a wide group of clients in order to make a profit, many do engage in covert discrimination in order to keep the business coming in.

The "reasons" for discrimination vary: from "they just don't fit in here" or "we are uncomfortable with them" or "they don't speak properly." What "properly" means to these employers is "like white people speak" or "like we speak." A Third World person who has taken on the attributes of the dominant white culture in dress, speech and demeanor has a better chance of finding work than someone with the same skills who has not adjusted their behavior to match white society. Similarly, Lesbians or Gay men who don't act "straight" have a more difficult time finding work than those who "pass" easily, regardless of how out they are in interviews or at work. One can be out to employers, but still must act straight and appear straight, as defined by the employer.

The personnel industry is highly competitive, and agencies will assume racism or heterosexism on the part of an employer, rather than "take a chance" on a Black or Gay/Lesbian candidate. This assumption of discrimination on the part of the agency is usually a cover for the agency's own prejudice. Third World applicants with "good test scores" and "good backgrounds," if they do not fit in the dominant white culture, will wait a long time for interviews or jobs until the agency feels it is "safe" to send them. "Safe" companies for minority applicants are usually Black or Third World owned, lower paying jobs, social service organizations, or firms with government contacts and thus government regulated affirmative action/e.o.e. quotas.

Companies do tell agencies not to send certain types of people on interviews or to temporary jobs. They do it over lunch or at a private meeting, "confiding" to the agency's representative that "we've had very bad luck with minorities here" or "the Spanish just don't fit in." When an order is placed, the customer will remind the representative that "you know the kind of person we need." They will be specific when placing an order as to sexual preference "if it's a man, he'd better not act Gay," or even "no Gays." The subtle method is to say things like, "Mr. Jones is a nice old southern gentleman and you know the kind of 'girl' to send him," communicating that the agency needs to send a youngish white woman, no minorities.

Well intentioned agencies have lost business by sending qualified minority applicants to an interview



Rev. Marianne Van Fossen

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MARIANNE VAN FOSSEN

MARIANNE VAN FOSSEN SPENT MANY YEARS EMPLOYED AS A PERSONNEL COUNSELOR BEFORE WORKING FULL TIME FOR OUR CHURCHES. A LICENSED CLERGY-PERSON, MARIANNE SERVES AS ASSOCIATE PASTOR AND DIRECTOR OF PASTORAL ADMINISTRATION FOR MCC LOS ANGELES. SHE IS THE CLERGY REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE SOUTHWEST DISTRICT TO THE COMMISSION ON FAITH, FELLOWSHIP AND ORDER. SHE LIVES JUST OUTSIDE OF LOS ANGELES WITH HER SPOUSE, SHERRE BOOTHMAN.

Woman's Psalm

The psalms were originally petitions, celebrations, explorations of their writers' lives in God. They were received by the people of God as expressions of spiritual journeys and have continued to be used by spiritual communities to address and enhance spiritual growth. The Woman's Psalms to be published over the next few months are a continuation of that tradition of incorporating the canonized Psalms into the life of spiritual communities. While the Psalms used the daily experience of shepherds, warriors and kings to provide ways of thinking about God and expressions of celebration and need, the Woman's Psalms use the daily experience of women.

Charlotte Preston, the author of the Woman's Psalms, is a writer living in Los Angeles. She began this project as part of her own spiritual journey. As one of the women who gathers for worship with the spiritual community called De Colores MCC, she recognizes that her spiritual wholeness, her personal serenity, her integrity, depends on recognizing and accepting the love of God and noticing God at work in her life each day, one day at a time.

WOMAN'S PSALM 16

Keep me, O God, for I take refuge
in You.
I say to You, "You are my God; All
the good I have I attribute to
You."
As for my spiritual contemporaries,
Among them are ones in whom I
delight.
For those who have not claimed
their spirituality,

I sorrow when their sorrows
multiply.
Nothing else, no one else, no
other,
Brings centering as You do.

What You offer me You offer
As the grandmother passes her
goods,
Her insights, her quilts to her
granddaughter,
Treasures kept in the family.
Your ways support me in my life.
The pattern in my life quilt,
My heritage, is beautiful to me.

I bless You who have counseled me
And those You send me as
counselors.
Their teaching from You become part
of me
So that I teach myself when I wake
at night.
I am best with You before me;
When I accept You as my strong hand
I am not shaken.
Then my heart is glad and my glory
rejoices;
My body itself feels safe.
You promise not to abandon my
essence to death;
You promise not to allow Your
children
To be forever separated from You.

You make me know Your way for me;
In Your presence I can know the
fullness of joy.
In Your strong hand there are
pleasures forever.

Rainbows, promises & suffering

A Dialogue
by Chris Glaser
Contributing Writer

God is fashioning a rainbow in the heavens just after the flood when Jesus saunters by...

JESUS: Hey, what's that?

GOD: I'm trying to make a sign, a symbol, to say, "All is forgiven, everything's going to be okay. No more worldwide floods." Something like that.

JESUS: Oh, so you're not angry at them anymore, huh?!

GOD: That's what I said, no more floods.

JESUS: It's beautiful, Dad!

GOD: Will you quit calling me "Dad"? I'm your "Mom" as much as your "Dad"!

JESUS: (Points down to earth) But that's what they keep calling you down there.!

GOD: They'll get over it.

JESUS: (Pointing to rainbow) It's very colorful.

GOD: Yes, but I can't seem to keep it straight. Keeps drooping on the sides.

JESUS: I kind of like it drooping on the sides. Look at all the colors! What a beautiful gift!

GOD: All my gifts are beautiful. Nothing but the best for my creatures.

JESUS: What about the flood?!

GOD: Too much of a good thing! Too much water! Too many tears! But I'm giving 'em another chance. Noah and his family are good people.

JESUS: Adam and Eve weren't bad--at first, that is.

GOD: Something went wrong. It was back to the drawing board. But I didn't want to start all over again. I did something right in creating Noah, and I wanted him to establish a whole new line.

JESUS: But you didn't create Noah! He was born!

GOD: You think I'm not involved in every creative process? (Resumes the creation of the rainbow, then, frustrated:) I give up! I can't get this sign straight. I guess the way I made earth--its curvature an all--makes it impossible to make it straight.

JESUS: Looks kinda like a bow.

GOD: Looks like a colorful frown to me.

JESUS: If they stand on their head, it would look like a colorful smile!

GOD: Always the optimist! Always the clown!

JESUS: Just trying to be helpful. What are you going to call it?

GOD: Well, I let Adam and Eve name all my other creations, I guess I'll let Noah and Family name this one. (Shouting down to earth:) Hey Noah, "when the bow is in the clouds, I will look upon it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth."

JESUS: Noah seems very impressed. He just called it a "rainbow." I kind of like it. I told you it looked like a bow. And it did come after all that rain! Nice name: rain-bow. Nice ring to it. Kind of romantic. (Getting carried away to the point of singing:) "Somewhere, over the rainbow..."

GOD: Will you stop!? People don't live over the rainbow. They live under it, under my covenant promise.

JESUS: Which is...?

GOD: That I love them, and they have nothing to fear. That our relationship is permanent. I'll always be with them.

JESUS: Sounds like marriage.

GOD: It's like that, but marriage is a contract between two equals. They'll never be my equal. I live over the rainbow. There under it. Not such a bad place to be.

JESUS: Yeah, but under the rainbow there's suffering. Look: Job just won the Creative Suffering Contest.

GOD: Suffering is the risk of creative freedom. Happiness is the opportunity of creative freedom. Because I love them, I feel their suffering and their joy. Here, put your hand on the top of this rainbow.

JESUS: (Does so, grimaces:) Ouch! (Then smiles:) Ooh! Somehow it both hurts and tickles.

GOD: Pleasure and pain are not so far apart on the continuum of the rainbow. They both remind you you're alive. Here at the top of the rainbow, we can experience both at the same time. That's our life--divine life, if you will, as opposed to earthly life. Down below, they experience pleasure and pain as radically opposite, like the two ends of the rainbow. It's all in the perspective.

JESUS: So the best thing to do would be to detach oneself from feeling either pleasure or pain.

GOD: Some people think that. But I think to be alive is to embrace both pleasure and pain, joy and suffering. If you were happy and smiling all the time, I'd think you were crazy. And if you were into pain and suffering, I'd equally think you were sick. But you gotta feel both! That's what passion is all about.

JESUS: Do I have passion?

GOD: Is the Pope Catholic?

JESUS: Who's the Pope? What's catholic"?

GOD: You'll see. Sure, you've got passion. You've got my passion. And you're going to show these people what passion is all about. I want you to slide down one end of this rainbow and show people I'm with them, that I identify with them.

JESUS: You mean, live under the rainbow?

GOD: Yep. It'll be hard. You'll be tempted just like they are.

JESUS: By you?

GOD: I tempt no one. And you better not tempt me! No, "each person is tempted when lured and enticed by his or her own desire."

JESUS: What am I going down there for?

GOD: After you're born and grow up, past adolescence and into some maturity---

JESUS: I have to start at the very beginning?!

GOD: Sure, I think we should be subtle. Anyway, about the age of 30, I want you to be baptized by John the Baptist, and then, before beginning your ministry, I want you to fast 40 days in the wilderness--y'know, to focus. To identify your purpose, your priority; to get rid of ambivalent attitudes.

JESUS: Things won't be clear down there as they are up here?

GOD: No, your perspective will change. You'll be under the rainbow. You'll be tempted to search for the pot of gold at the pleasure end of the rainbow, instead of seeking me at the top of the rainbow.

JESUS: You mean, I'll forget how much I enjoy being with you? How much I love you?

GOD: Not entirely. But you'll be inundated with other data that might lead you to believe you are not my child. Like many people, who forget they are my children, and forget the covenant relationship I have with them. And the promise I'll be with them, in joy and in suffering. They end up at the suffering end of the rainbow, or somewhere in the middle without the good sense to look up and see the rainbow. I want you to remind them of my rainbow, my promise, my love. Even those who have already died, like in the flood. I'm going to send you to preach to all the spirits in prison.

JESUS: And what will I say?

GOD: "The time is fulfilled, and the realm of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel." But they won't believe you unless you seek first my realm here at the top of the rainbow, where pleasure and pain, joy and suffering, all the colors of life, converge.

You'll be tempted to satisfy and please yourself, but you must learn how to postpone self-gratification, to reach higher heights. You'll be hungry and tempted to turn stones into bread to satisfy yourself. But remember. "You shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."

JESUS: That seems a cruel thing to say to the hungry of the world.

GOD: Sometimes my word takes the form of bread. I am not insensitive to the needs of the hungry. I inspire people to share their bread with the hungering multitudes. You'll do the same. And you'll do so if you focus on my word, my words.

JESUS: You know, God, someday people will be able scientifically to explain rainbows.

GOD: I should hope so! I didn't create dummies! Hopefully they'll be able scientifically to explain creation itself! But to explain creation or rainbows is not necessarily to understand either. In those days, people will do anything and take anything and everything to avoid suffering, and seek happiness in all the wrong places.

They'll blame me for their suffering, and not see me in their joy. Many will be unable to transcend themselves, their own needs, their own viewpoints, their own mortality, and reach out to one another in compassion, and in a passionate search for my realm, which is truly "somewhere over the rainbow."

JESUS: (Rehearsing the line:) "Repent, for the realm of God is at hand."

GOD: That's right. You'll be my new rainbow. You too will be lifted up, as a sign of your passion, and I will look upon you and remember the everlasting covenant between me and every living creature upon the earth.

JESUS: Will I droop like your rainbow?

GOD: Yes, unfortunately. But I will not let your enemies exult over you, not ultimately let you be put to shame. I'll relieve the troubles of your heart, and bring you out of your distresses. And you'll return victorious to me.

You won't remember this, you won't know this for sure, under the rainbow. But you'll be my way of saying, "All is forgiven, everything's going to be okay." I promise.

JESUS: "The time is fulfilled, and the realm of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel."

Chris Glaser

Chris Glaser is a graduate of Yale Divinity School and has served the West Hollywood Presbyterian Church for the past six years as Director of the Lazarus Project, an outreach ministry within the Gay and Lesbian community. As a member of the Presbyterian Task Force to Study Homosexuality, he was involved in that denomination's debate over the ordination of Lesbian and Gay people, and was not ordained himself because of his openness.

A RESURRECTION STORY

by Rev. Ro Halford

It was a difficult time for me, the week of January 28 - February 1, 1985. On monday, 28 January I was home "sick". I felt an intense tightness in my chest and back and had difficulty breathing. The week previous I had a bout with a cold, therefore, I simply assumed this was a continuation of the "cold." By monday afternoon the tightness had pretty much subsided.

On Tuesday morning I received a phone call at 7:30 a.m. from my sister. In her anxiety and distress over - "there is no good way to give anyone bad news" - she blurted out, "our father died."

There was a few minutes of silence before I heard her say, "Are you still there? Are you okay?"

Although my father had been ill for a couple of years he was taking care of himself with regular doctor's visits, etc. I was shocked to learn of his death and I saw no need for it to happen.

As I process my own pain and go through all the questions in my mind - I realize he just didn't want to be here anymore.

My Dad had decided to let go of his earthly life and chose to go to the next plane. He was ready and that was that. (He died of respiratory failure January 28, 1985, monday morning).

Seeing him for the last time, saying our good-byes, was extremely difficult, yet, it was a moment of renewal - not good-bye. Knowing him as well as I did, I was able to see on his face the satisfaction he must have felt having "done it his way." His jaw was set in a defiant way and he was at peace. I had to chuckle as I looked at him and I said, "You stubborn old man."

Sharing this special moment with my family enabled us to get in touch with our closeness---our relatedness. We declared our birthright with one another, and were able to share in a more personal way, the lives that both my mother and father had given us. And, indeed their lives go on - through each of us - In our minds, in our spirits, and in our blood relatedness. My parents are both gone in the earthly, physical sense, however, they are very alive in my sister, my brothers and myself.

I sensed that a personal kind of resurrection took place for each of us during the private viewing we held for my father. A resurrection of spirit - emotionally releasing our Dad - accepting his peacefulness. His peace and the Spirit of

continued on page 9

Rev. Jennie Boyd Bull and Rev.Joseph Gilbert take a moment, during a break, to compare notes during the recent Plenary of the Consultation on Church Union held in Baltimore November 26-30. While MCC is not a member of COCU, the two were appointed as Observer-Consultants by UFMCC. Member Churches are the African Methodist Episcopal Church, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, the Episcopal Church, the International Council of Community Churches, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the United Church of Christ and the United Methodist Church.

continued from page 8

God filled us and we were renewed with hope. It is the first time we ever prayed together as a family. It is the first time all of my family encountered me in a pastoral role as I led them in personal, private, prayer. It heightened my sense of connectedness not only with my nuclear family, but also with my MCC family. I truly experienced a re-birth and renewal...- for me, a Resurrection!

During the funeral service, two friends from MCC-San Diego were present to give moral and spiritual support, and it gave me a warm feeling just to see them there. Sheila Rawls and Bambi Lignell were there at a time when I was emotionally filled with uncertainty and anxiety, and I thank them for for that.

The Chapel was filled with the joy of knowing this man, my father, was at peace. I touched Dad's hand and I was not afraid. I rejoiced in his moment of truth. I celebrated his victory.

I will grieve for awhile at my personal loss. I will miss my dad, but I will mostly remember and give thanks for the special gift he and my mother gave me - the gift of life.

In time, I will simply remember the specialness we have had together, and be content in their peacefulness. The pain of loss will be dimmer, the joy of the love between us - the bonding, will linger for a lifetime, and more...

Indeed there was that moment of resurrection - for all of my family, I believe.

God's Grace shone in us and filled us with new life.

(Luke 23: 43)

In that final hour, that moment of truth, the one on the cross reached out to Jesus with hope. The other, settled for unbelief, disdain and hoplessness. Jesus, scripture tells us, said with at least a hint of compassion in his voice, (paraphrase, mine), "You will join me where I go, to a better place." There is at least a kind of hope that somewhere besides where they were, was much better than what they were experiencing.

There is that moment of truth in our lives (and it can happen under a variety of circumstances, many, many times for us), when we are confronted with our own reality. We might be confronted with day-to-day living and how we go about the business of living, or we might be confronted with our own mortality -- death -- and what dying really means for us. We begin to search within for that which draws us out.

We reach for an escape from pain with an expectation for wholeness. All too often we reject wholeness by being satisfied with short-term pain relief. The one on the cross next to Jesus reached out with an awareness of "something better" ahead, the other, simply resigned to death without hope.

If, in fact, we accept our own mortality, and are resigned to acceptance, then, indeed we can begin to reach out of ourselves toward the wholeness of resurrection. Whatever resurrection means for each of us, and however we define it, it is nonetheless impactful.

The one on the cross next to Jesus had a sense of God's presence, the other rejected and denied that truth. The one, reached out toward wholeness - the other just wanted to die.

GOD IS WITH US

A Men's Retreat

by Jeff Pulling
West Hartford, Connecticut

In December my lover David and I joined about 40 men of MCC New York for a Men's Retreat at Deer Hill Retreat Center, Wappinger Falls, New York, near the Hudson River. I went to the weekend looking forward to the men's sharing and the relaxation, but I came away more spiritually touched and renewed than I have been in a long time.

The theme of this Advent retreat was "Emmanuel - God Is With Us," and the weekend was divided into four parts: The Face of God (faith imagination), The Heart of God (prayer), The Body of God (sexuality), and the Hands of God (us). We explored these "Emmanuel" themes through group presentations and small group sharing times.

The small group of which I was a member was a grace-filled opportunity to discover and to reveal more of myself in my understanding/imagery of God and prayer, my sexuality, and my gifts and abilities. I also became acquainted with several other men who are on a spiritual search and journey like myself. As we listened to each other's stories and affirmed each other, I felt myself opening up and growing a little more.

The worship services were in the form of morning and evening prayer; they were simple and powerful. Before the retreat I was frankly a little anxious about how comfortable I would be with people who seem much more theologically liberal than I. The worship services showed me, however, how much God "rewards" those who seek God.

I was deeply moved by the presence of God as all 44 of us men sang, joined in a prayer chant, and prayed. The prayer chant was a Latin one from the Taize community in France, "Adoramus te, Domine" ("We praise you, O God"). This chant keeps coming to my mind (and heart) ever since. We also spent an hour in silence one of the mornings, and the nature walk I took during that time heightened my sensitivity to God working in me and in the world around me.

aids...

A Gay Man's Health Experience

PART VIII
by Rev. Steve Pieters
Contributing Writer

A question foremost on the minds of some people around me is, "How long do you have, Steve?" Some friends have even asked me, "Steve, are you dying?" Some people expect me to know, on some instinctive level, exactly how long I have left to live.

I think some people want to know if they should be grieving yet. Others are very ordered people, who want life to be predictable. Yet others are simply the type who want to know the end of the story early in the book. I have thought about the question too. Am I dying? Having aids makes me face the question.

No, I'm not dying, not today. Today, I am living with hope. I hope to live long enough to experience a cure for aids. I hope to be healed of this condition. I believe that even if medicine cannot cure me, God can heal me. I'm not dying; I'm living.

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And I could very well be one of those to live with this thing and survive it! I might very well survive aids, and die of pastoral exhaustion, in the pulpit, at age 87.

One thing is clear: no one really knows enough about aids to give me an accurate prognosis. There are too many individual variables.

And yes, I'm terrified that I am dying, and dying too soon. Sometimes it all feels like a bad Susan Hayward movie. But I'm asking my friends not to hold me to that script. Let me transcend Susan Hayward, and shoot for Gene Kelly, "Singin' in the Rain!"

I will die one day, but today I am living with aids.

Part of living with aids is dealing with treatment conditions. Hospitals were never meant to be places of fun. And I don't know if people with other diseases have to put up with similar problems. But I get angry about the conditions I have to deal with. Facing the worst health crisis of my life, I want the optimum conditions for healing!

There is no aids ward at USC/LA County Hospital. Many MCC'ers in Los Angeles County participated in letter-writing to get a County aids clinic. The reply was, basically, that they are aware of the problem.

Meanwhile, the room where I have received most of my treatments is small. It is just big enough for the two beds, two desks, two chairs and a set of lockers and cabinets, with very little floor space left over. There are usually three staff nurses present in the room, and seldom less than three or four patients waiting, sometimes as many as 10 patients, who overflow into the barren hall. There is a bulletin board with flyers from the aids Project/LA and the Shanti Foundation. The nurses have posted an all-male calendar and a picture of Klinger in Cleopatra drag from M*A*S*H. The magazines are mostly

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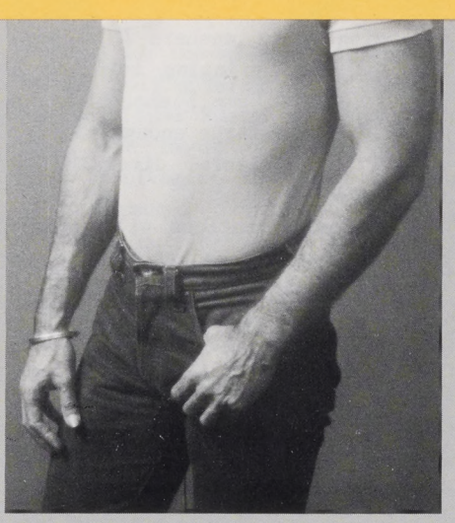

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aids...

A Gay Man's Health

PART VIII
by Rev. Steve Pieters
Contributing Writer

A question foremost on the minds of some people around me is, "How long do you have, Steve?" Some friends have even asked me, "Steve, are you dying?" Some people expect me to know, on some instinctive level, exactly how long I have left to live.

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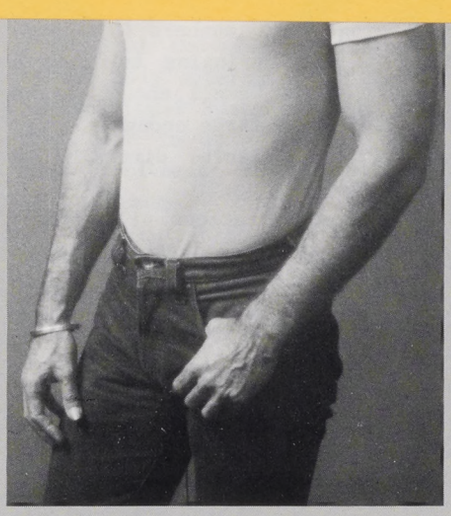

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GQ's. Hospital administration had them take down a sign that said, "USC/LA County Gay Clinic."

On one Monday morning, I arrived early and there was no seat, so I stood for awhile. Then I was called to have my blood drawn. We are all amazingly accustomed to having blood drawn in front of each other. After the nurse took eight big vials of blood, I didn't feel like standing anymore. There were only two chairs, both occupied. I sat on a little footstool, my back up against a locker.

When it was time for treatment, the nurse had me sit on one of the beds, my arm on a bed tray to receive the injection of Leukocyte Dialysate. Sam pays a surprising amount of attention as he injects the "juice." There are probably a dozen PWA's waiting for Sam's attention. Everybody is buzzing today, because one of the new PWA's is a familiar X-Rated Video Star. Sam gives me the control injection, to test how my body is reacting to the treatment. He hands me a sheet of paper with an arm drawn on it to record my reactions at 24 and 48 hours, and asks me to wait while he does something with my patient plastic card.

The foot stool is taken, and I need to sit down. So I sit on the floor, and another PWA steps over me to get to the bed where I was for his treatment. I try to strike up a conversation, but this is one of the brothers who is too angry and too hurt to talk right now. I understand. I've been there. So I just try to mind my own business and wait on the floor.

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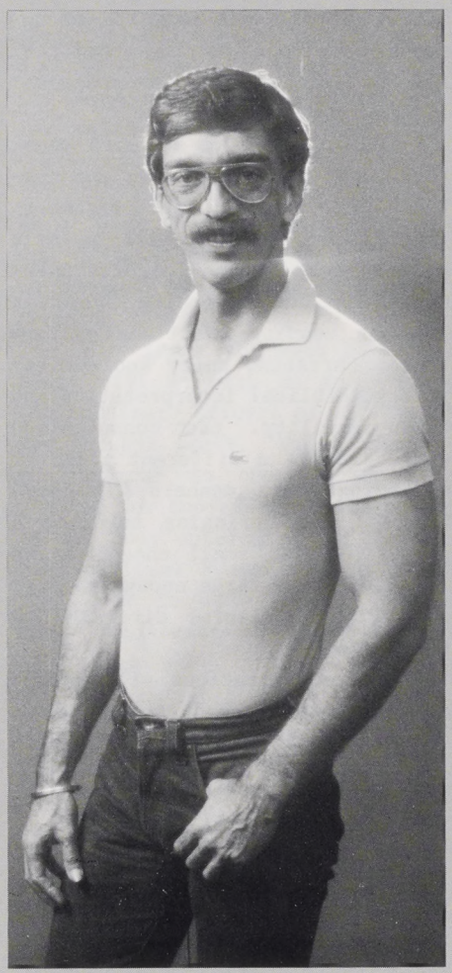
On my way out of the room, I stop for a brief discussion with another PWA about the Mayor's Task Force on aids. It evolves into a lively discussion among three or four men about the merits or drawbacks of the aids Project.

Three or four more Gaymen have arrived for their treatment, and now they're starting to sit on the floor in the hall. It only gets like this one or two days a week, I am told. Somebody asks why there isn't someone there from the aids Project now, to help deal with these conditions, rather than plan fundraising events to see "La Cage Aux Folles".

I wonder where MCC is in all this, and what can we do?



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Process, ministry continues with NCC

N C C C

by Nancy Wilson
Contributing Writer

The recent meeting of the Governing Board of the National Council of Churches of Christ (NCCC) in the United States proved to be filled with opportunities for learning and witnessing for all of us who attended from the Universal Fellowship. In addition to the Co-Chairs of the Department of Ecumenical Relations (myself and Sandi Robinson from Columbus, Ohio), in attendance were Rev. Jennie Boyd Bull, Rev. Karen Ziegler, Rev. Joseph Gilbert and folks from MCC Philadelphia; Worship Coordinator Eleanor Nealy from MCC Princeton, and many people from our congregation in New Jersey.

We were there to continue our conversations with Governing Board members, to witness some important moments in the life of the 34 year old Council, and to see through the Council's continuing struggle with our application for membership.

Our issues did not come up until the last day of the meetings. Two important actions were taken. First of all, we do not have to re-apply for membership (this has been in question ever since the motion to postpone indefinitely was passed last year in Hartford). Our application remains on active file. We can update it, and we are the ones who can ask them to reconsider it at any time.

Secondly, they passed a document entitled "Report of the Committee on Developing a Process for the NCCC in the USA and the UFMCC to Remain in Study and Conversation Together." This report, compiled by a committee that included men, women, whites, Blacks, Orthodox and mainline churches, recommended the following:

1. That a steering committee be appointed to work on a process for the next triennium (1985-87). MCC will be able to appoint our own members to this steering committee, and we will design the consultations together.

2. In the fall of each year, for a day and a half, in conjunction with the Governing Board meetings, a consultation will be held on one of the three concerns identified by the Governing Board in 1983 as needing additional attention: Christian unity and ecclesiology, Biblical interpretation and human sexuality. Each consultation would involve a different group of Governing Board members with members of MCC, bringing together a group that is "small enough to be manageable and large enough to represent the ecclesial diversity of the Council."

The consultations will report at each meeting, and at the end of the triennium they will make recommendations to the Governing Board.

This is exactly what we have been working for years to achieve with the Governing Board! It gives us the opportunity to really address the biblical issues, issues concerning the nature of human sexuality, and our whole understanding of church and ministry. Our ecumenical experience overwhelmingly demonstrates that when we can sit down at the table with people, share, witness, discuss and pray together the Holy Spirit inevitably moves to change attitudes, lives, hearts and minds. We rejoice that the Governing Board has built this possibility into its life for the next three years!

Once again, it is important to state, that membership in and of itself has never been our most important goal. It is the story that we have to share with those who represent 40 million Christians in the USA, and what we can mutually learn from each other that is paramount.

There were many exciting moments at this meeting. Sandi Robinson and I got to shake hands and introduce ourselves to Coretta Scott King, who was there for Dr. Claire Randall's retirement celebration. The New Brunswick Rainbow Coalition had challenged the NCCC about meeting at the Hyatt Hotel in New Brunswick, which had unfair employment and social policies. The NCCC helped the Hyatt and the Coalition to come to some settlements in that regard and NCCC members joined the coalition in a demonstration outside of the new hotel. The new President of the Council, Bishop Phillip Cousins (AME) really mobilized the Council around this cause. He has a charismatic, no nonsense, lets cut through the parliamentary stuff, way of leading the council that is refreshing and reminded all of us in UFMCC of you know who!

As usual, we met lots of closeted Gays/Lesbians from every conceivable church and position. We provide a kind of underground ministry in coffee shops, hallways, lounges or in the NCCC visitors section.

In addition the NCCC is going through its own version of a "GSS" proposal called the Presidential Panel. The proposal, among other things, calls for more grassroots involvement, more and richer worship together and ways to deepen

continued on page 13

GENERAL CONFERENCE XII

FREE to BE

by Jim Voltz
General Conference
Coordinator

General Conference 1985, will be held June 30th to July 7th in Sacramento, California. Sacramento the home of California State Legislation is also the home of our host church, River City MCC.

The Rev. Elder Freda Smith along with Madeline Reed and Sally Bruce are working very hard to help make this the best conference ever. The facilities at the modern Sacramento Community Convention Center are the best we have ever had and will lend themselves into all of our varied requirements.

For the first time at a General Conference we are planning on having equipment to aid the hearing impaired and also for translation into Spanish. We are hoping to expand these facilities into more languages for the next conference in 1987.

Opening the conference this year will be an evening Service hosted by River City MCC, followed by an extra event reception. This will be a great opportunity to say hello to old friends and to meet new sisters and brothers at our "family reunion."

The Rev. Elder Troy D. Perry will open the General Session on Monday morning at 11:30 a.m. after which groups will be split up into the General Business Session, workshops, seminars and other activities for non-delegates. A few of the workshops planned are; "Student Clergy and the Credentialling Process" by the Rev. Ken Martin, "What is Spirituality" by the commission on Faith, Fellowship and Order, "What is Sexuality" by the commission on F.F.O., and "Your Spiritual Gifts" by Elder Michael Mank.

Tuesday's highlight is the Human Rights Award breakfast where we will be honoring some of those that have given so much of themselves in our community and the community of the world.

The entire week continues with business sessions and workshops which will be both stimulating and interesting to all. Our local MCC group is making plans for a special area to be set aside for us to enjoy the 4th of July fireworks along the Sacramento river bank where we can relax and have a picnic with our friends.

On Friday afternoon there will be a "High Tea" to honor Rev. Joseph Gilbert who helped save "Old Sacramento" where a street is being named in his honor.

Throughout the week beautiful music will be with us due to the extraordinary efforts of Rev. Danny Ray and his staff. This years music program is the biggest ever planned for conference and promises to not only entertain, but enhance our spiritual awareness. This has been done in an effort to create more involvement for non-delegates at conference.

The culmination of the week, when all the business sessions are completed, is the Ordination Ceremony on Saturday morning followed by the Ordination Reception. General Conference XII "FREE TO BE" officially closes on Sunday after Worship Service and we return to our homes to continue our thoughts and work for Christ.

So, plan on coming to General Conference 1985, not only to be with your brothers and sisters at our "Family Reunion" but also to see the workings of your church and most of all, to Worship with us.

For more information and registration forms see your local Church Group, or write: U.F.M.C.C. 5300 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 304, Los Angeles, CA 90029 (213) 464-5100

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continued from page 12

their appreciation for each denomination.

More than one governing Board member has told us that much of these directions came from the process of dialogue with the UFMCC. Our impact is sometimes more than we imagine.

Certainly, one of the highlights of the event was the address by Noble Laureate Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa, at the installation of Rev. Arie Brouwer, the new General Secretary of the Council. Bishop Tutu was spellbinding in the simplicity of his message about love. After the worship service, at a reception for the Bishop and new General Secretary, several MCCer's introduced themselves to Bishop Tutu. He knew who we were and said to Rev. Joseph Gilbert, "I'm glad you haven't gone away!" It was a powerful moment of affirmation, from someone whose struggles may seem so remote from ours. It was a true benediction on the whole experience of this triennium, and we have begun our journey with the NCCC in the USA.

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fellowship news

our journey

TALE OF TWO CHURCHES

DEACON
St. Luke's MCC
Jacksonville, FL

This is a tale of two churches. The first was a congregation devastated by an arson attack which occurred during a time of internal conflict. The fire-bombing of our church in January of this year came close to destroying more than just the building. At the same time our pastor, Rev. Don Johnson, was suffering through the final stages of terminal cancer. This was a time of deepest testing for our congregation. All of this came as we celebrated our 10th anniversary as a chartered church in the Universal Fellowship.

For several months we struggled just to hold on and rebuild. We believed that we would "reap in due season if we fainted not." At our Spring Congregational meeting we unanimously voted to call Rev. Michael Piazza and his spouse Bill Eure to come and lead our congregation. Rev. Piazza had been our interim pastor a couple of years before when we were without a pastor, so he knew our congregation and there was already a strong relationship established.

We began immediately to take care of the damages which were left over from the fire. The entire summer was spent in a rebuilding effort. We intalled new pews, central heat and air, new pulpit, altar and communion rail. We built a partition wall which allowed us to use some previously wasted space as a Fellowship Hall. We repainted and replaced the paneling, bought 30 new choir robes, all new altar furnishings, a computer and a new copier. All of this was done debt free, with the insurance paying for about half and fund raising paying the balance.

During the entire month of September we celebrated the renovation and all of the new life around our church. We had a series of special services which we called "Resurrection '84." That is exactly what we have experienced--resurrection. We chose a new name for our congregation--St. Luke's--as an expression of all the newness.

St. Luke's was selected because Luke was a physician and represents the healing ministry of the church. Luke's is the gospel which emphasizes Jesus' ministry to the gentiles, women and the outcast. The entire community has gotten excited about the new name and new life. Average attendance has gone from 35-40 during April and May to 80-100 during October. We have had a couple of Sundays when attendance went over the 100 mark for a regular service. Giving has also increased and we have received more than our budget amount every week for three months. The new budget which we just adopted was a $20,000 increase over this past year. On Wednesday nights we have averaged about 35 for our educational programs.

There are many, many activities which have come along with the new life; fund raisers, dramatic presentations, seminars, healing services, etc. Best of all though there is a unity of Spirit and an excitement about what God is doing. The church is growing in number (101 members), but best of all the church is growing in the depth of its love for God and for one another.

SHARE YOUR "GOOD NEWS" WITH OTHERS

JOURNEY would like to feature some human interest stories in the future. Has some individual or group in your church gone out of their way to be of Christian service? Had a unique or interesting ministry? Deserve to be recognized for their selfless and giving attitude? Please let us share it with others. Submit material to: *JOURNEY* 5300 Santa Monica Boulevard, Suite 304, Los Angeles, CA 90029.

ST. LUKE'S MCC VICTIM OF FIRE BOMBING

St. Luke's, in Jacksonville, FL, was again the victim of an arsonist attack. Fortunately the firebomb landed in a place where little could burn. The carpet in the fellowship area was destroyed and there was a good bit of smoke damage but otherwise the building was unharmed. About 40 people volunteered to repaint and ready the building for the Christmas services. By the end of the day the building was almost as good as new.

At an emergency meeting of the Board the decision was made to put lexan (unbreakable plastic) over all the windows to permanently secure the building. The challenge was to then raise the needed funds before the arsonist acted again. It was decided that since we were in a financially secure position we could afford to use the entire Christmas offering for the windows.

Everyone was invited to give generously and the response exceeded all expectations. The Christmas offering totaled almost $2,000.

Support for the church has been expressed from many sources.

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Calls of concern came in from Rev. Elders Troy Perry, Nancy Wilson, and Don Eastman.

NORTHEAST DISTRICT FUNDS CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The District Conference delegates and clergy enthusiastically endorsed and funded a Christian Education proposal which Rev. Jamie McAlister and Rev. Willie White presented.

Rev. McAlister worked on this project and she recruited Rev. J. T. Atkinson, pastor of MCC Hartford and Art Labonte, of MCC Springfield, to work with her. They prepared two Christian Education series to demonstrate to the Conference the kind of program we envisioned for the district.

Dr. Jeff Pulling, dean of Samaritan Extended Studies, voiced strong support for our District-wide approach to Christian Education and anticipates making our resources and expertise available to other Fellowship congregations through Samaritan.

The first two series are: "Free At Last! An Approach Towards Ministry with Persons with Disabilities"; and "Searching for Belief--The Glory of God is Humanity Fully Alive." These have been presented to each church in the District.

The Task Force will generate a constant flow of materials which it will send to the churches free of charge. Each program segment is designed so that the average layperson may facilitate the education process.

FT. WORTH MCC PASTOR BEGINS SIXTH YEAR

Jim Norwood celebrated his fifth anniversary as pastor of the Agape MCC in Ft. Worth on December 9th.

Five years ago, when Norwood came to Agape MCC there were seven people who met in a storefront building on Hemphill St.

A "Building Expansion Fund" has been established towards a new multipurpose facility. Thus far, an estimated $12,000 has been received toward a goal of $50,000. The facility will include a social hall, classroom space, a kitchen and additional office space.

Norwood is a graduate of Hardin-Simmons University of Abilene and holds two degrees from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary as well as an Honorary Doctor of Law degree.

Reprinted from:
THE DALLAS VOICE, December 7, 1984.

NEW COVENANT MCC HOSTS CATHOLIC COALITION FOR GAY RIGHTS

A one-day workshop sponsored by the Catholic Coalition for Gay Civil Rights was held at New Covenant Metropolitan Community Church on Monday, December 10. Topics of the workshop included "Homosexuality and Sociological Theory" and "Homosexuality and the Family: History of Pastoral Ministry."

The workshop leaders were Si ter Jeannine Gramick, SSND and Blythe Batten. Sister Jeannine Gramick holds a PhD in Education from the University of Pennsylvania. She was an Assistant Professor of Mathematics at the College of Notre Dame of Maryland, the University of Maryland and at University of California in Los Angeles. Her articles on homosexuality have appeared in various journals. Since 1971, she has been involved in Gay/Lesbian ministry, with the approval of her religious administrators. She is the Editor of HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH (Thomas More Press).

Blythe Batten holds a BS in Computer Science from the School of Engineering of the City College of New York. Having lived two years in countries outside the U.S., she has worked with marginated groups of people since 1976. She is presently the administrator of New Ways Ministry, a national Catholic ministry serving the needs of Gay and Lesbian people, their friends and families, and is also on the Board of Directors of S.M.Y.A.L., a Washington DC metropolitan area organization concerned with the special needs of sexual minority youth.

This workshop was directed to clergy in pastoral ministry, women and men religious, lay religious leaders, and others concerned with pastoral, family and sexual issues.

AWARDS PRESENTED TO CLERGY
By Willie White
District Coordinator
Northeast District

The ministry of the District is only as strong as our people make it, and many people over the years have given great amounts of time, talents and energies to the Northeast District.

At our District Conference I took the risk of singling out some of our people for expression of the following appreciation: A Congregational Service Award was presented to MCC New York for its support of Rev. Susan Eenigenburg's work in starting our current MCC Brooklyn ministry; Rekindler Awards were presented to Ted Ewald and Rev. Jamie McAlister for their work in restarting our ministries in Syracuse and Worcester, respectively; and Student Clergy Service Awards were given to Julie Benavides, Carolyn Perkins Delano and Jim Burns for assuming the additional responsibilities of being worship coordinators during their time as student clergy.

The Awards were in carefully selected categories and were restricted to persons whose ministries coincided with my term as District Coordinator.

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"Look at the Metropolitan Community Church today – the Gay Church – almost accepted into the World Council . . . National Council of Churches. Almost. The vote was against them. But they will try again and again until they get in. And the tragedy is that they would get one vote. Because they are spoken of here in Jude as being brute beasts – that is going to the baser lust of the flesh to live immorally and so Jude describes this as apostasy. Thank God this vile and satanic system will one day be utterly annihilated and there will be a celebration in heaven."

From a Sermon on the TV Program "Old Time Gospel Hour" by Rev. Jerry Falwell, President, Moral Majority.

No, Jerry, that's not what Metropolitan Community Church is like because:

We are a caring, loving group of people.

We have created a 60-minute television documentary to confront those kind of lies, and others made by people like you who preach that we, as Lesbian and Gay males are brute beasts, not people.

Our documentary portrays the lives of women and men in the Gay community praying for and struggling to secure freedom and liberation for all people . . . teachers . . . Cuban Refugees . . . Third World People . . . persons with AIDS . . . Gay parents . . . the churched and unchurched . . . youth and seniors . . . sisters and brothers around the world who seek peace and prosperity. We have shared on tape the truth that spirituality and sexuality are compatible.

Mr. Falwell, I am asking my friends for help to show it like it is. I am asking them to please send their tax-deductible donations to me to get this message on the air. And it will be on the air because my friends care.

GOD, GAYS & THE GOSPEL: This is OUR story.

A television presentation of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches.

YES! I would like to answer Jerry!

- ☐ AN ENABLER: Minimum donation of $50.00 per year.
- ☐ A SPONSOR: Minimum donation of $100.00 per year.
- ☐ A CONTRIBUTOR: Minimum donation of $500.00 per year.
- ☐ A PARTNER: Minimum donation of $1,000.00 per year.
- ☐ I cannot join at this time, but keep me on your mailing list.
- ☐ Enclosed is my donation to help defray costs.

Send your tax-deductible donations to:
Reverend Troy D. Perry
UFMCC Media Fund
5300 Santa Monica Boulevard, #304
Los Angeles, CA 90029

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

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MID-ATLANTIC DISTRICT FALL CONFERENCE WRAP-UP

Using the theme, "Relationship to God in Neighbor and Self," the Mid-Atlantic District of the UFMCC met in Philadelphia during the weekend of October 19-21 for its Fall Conference. Over 140 participants including clergy and lay representative from 15 congregations in six states and the District of Columbia gathered for a weekend of worship, business meeting, workshops and Christian Fellowship.

Perhaps one of the more inspirational and moving moments of the conference occured during the worship services which included special music by various groups. With musical selections from the Baltimore MCC choir, the quartet "Rainbow," soloist Charlie Palmer and a singing and signing team calling themselves "Sound and Motion," conference participants found themselves deeply moved.

Another highlight of the conference was a special business session in Congress Hall with a letter of welcome and support read to us from Philadelphia Mayor Wilson Goode. The event symbolized the continued active participation of Gays/Lesbians in all areas of government and political life from colonial times to the present.

DISPLAY ADVERTISING RATE PER ISSUE

1 PAGE	$140	(7-1/2"x9-1/2")
1/2 PAGE	$ 80	(7-1/2"x4-5/8" or 3-5/8"x9-1/2")
1/3 PAGE	$ 65	(7-1/2"x3" or 2-3/8"x9-1/2")
1/4 PAGE	$ 50	(3-5/8"x4-5/8")
BUS. CARD	$ 25	(3-5/8"x2-1/2")

All dimensions given are horizontal x vertical. There is an additional 15% preparation charge for ads not camera ready. A discount for repeat ads paid in full in advance is available at:
FULL YEAR (12 issues) 20% off
HALF YEAR (6 issues) 10% off

(Preparation charges not included in discounted rates). Checks must accompany ad copy, payable to UFMCC, marked "JOURNEYAd." All advertising must be inclusive of gender, age and race. Advertising of tobacco, alcoholic beverages or sexually oriented services will not be accepted.

My worst Christmas

by Sheila Harken Rosencrans
Golden Gate MCC

Thanksgiving had passed; Christmas was closing quickly on me. Clergy staff meetings with Rev. James Sandmire and the other three clergy on staff members were busier every week as we prepared for the holiday.

This was my second Christmas in San Francisco - alone. I had been a student clergy at Golden Gate MCC for about 10 months. The internship cast a very large shadow in my life. Several times in the last few months I had considered quitting. I was also studying poetry academically, and the two areas of my life - the church and the poetry - seemed to clash more than they came together.

The thought of being alone at Christmas seemed deadly to me. My previous MCC experiences in Boston and Ventura, which are small churches, found many of the church members sharing holidays as a family. Golden Gate was so much larger. And an off-again, on-again relationship of seven months was permanently off. The woman and I had shared a support group which I found non-existent after our split-up.

The Christmas season found me with a deepening sense of alienation. I was not feeling pain, only distance. I seemed to only be going through the motions. I had been preparing a manuscript to enter in the Stegner Poetry Fellowship at Stanford for several months and did not have the money to send it in. I forced myself to borrow money from a friend. The next morning I awoke and wrote a poem about the distance I had been feeling in conjunction with the church and a series of workshops on the Eucharist I'd attended:

THOSE WHO WATCH

Shall I write of the red
brilliance of poinsettias
against white altar linen?

Flowers' fiery anthesis of the
Passion their five fingers
break my daily bread on the
night before nothing

I am filled with remembrance.
I lift chalice heavy with wine
at height to hide my face from
those who watch.

I feel imprint of new
awareness as my fingers
elevate the Host to eye level
of those who watch.

My indistinct voice joins
centuries' hum of comfortable
words.

Angels and archangels narrow
their eyes as I try to invoke
body and blood participation
with those who watch.

Gloriously, I read recitation
filled with cold joy of
reserved sacraments,
poinsettias on the altar, and
those who watch.

I also found that the welfare mother, whom I had been for a few years, emerged hungry this Christmas season. There was a loneliness, a hunger for meaningfulness which seemed to grow daily. My daughters called me from Iowa and I felt further removed from participation in life. I seemed to float through time and space, unattached to those around me. I would go home at night and cry, not from pain, but from lack of participation.

I was not working, so time

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dawdled in my days. I spent many hours, often at the church office, listening to people who told me they had no place to go for Christmas, no money for Christmas, as well as listening to plans for others' parties and who they were going to invite.

I began seeing a woman who, I discovered later, was entering a medical crisis. Two days before Christmas she told me goodbye. She told another friend that she was going into S.F. General Hospital. I rushed over to the hospital and there was no evidence of her being there. I spent about two hours trying to locate her. Later, when I found out she had registered under another name, I felt not only the frustration of not being able to minister to her, but also the alienation she had when she had trusted no one who knew her by telling them her real name. I felt ineffective.

The day of Christmas Eve I showed up at the church office. Rev. Sandmire asked me to make a call to Father Mark who'd called about a service for the prisoners at the county/city jail. I called him back and assured him that someone from Golden Gate would participate. The day went by quickly, despite my gloom. At four o'clock we still had no one for the service, so I volunteered hesitantly. I was the low person on the staff and had never done this sort of thing before. I told Rev. Sandmire and he said, okay, incredulously. I thought it would help me to pass time until the midnight service.

I was to be at the jail a 7:30. I arrived early, feeling hungry but had no money to eat. At 7:15 the woman from Prisoner Services showed up. There had been a prisoners' service at the jail several days before, but a deputy sheriff had refused the Gays' entry into the service. This woman wanted us to do a service for those Gays. She'd forgotten her keys and ran back to get them. While waiting for her to return, a Jesuit from Dignity, Chris, showed up. The priest and I waited, discussing Mary Daly and other encouraging topics for a woman trying to be in the church, outside the office on the cold and windy San Francisco night.

The woman returned shortly without the keys and we went into the jail, rather than the office. Harry Britt, S.F. Supervisor and a ordained Methodist minister who I had met in Boston, the Jesuit priest and I sat in the cold marble reception area of the Hall of Justice and planned the service. Then two men from Dignity showed up to assist us. The woman from Prisoner Services carried root beer and orange sodas and pastries for the prisoners.

We were each issued a plastic ID tag to wear as we were led through a series of white metal gates that buzzed and clanged as they were opened and shut. My sense of alienation intensified with the clang of each door. I wondered why me, who had so little to celebrate, were coming to these prisoners to show them the celebration of Christmas. I had no idea.

Harry started the service after 17 young men in flourescent orange scrub suits were ushered into the small conference room. Two tables had been lined up end-to-end and folding chairs put around them.

At first the clergy was at one end of the table; the prisoners at the other. Someone suggested we mix and we did. Harry started by talking about the injustice of the prisoners being excluded from the other Christmas service. We all sang a carol. Next it was my turn. I read a psalm, Psalm 72 which tells about God's justice. I inclusified all the references of God, stumbling in places where "he" occurred three times in a sentence. I remember feeling that this effort was probably lost on a room full of men, but I persisted despite my feelings.

During the next carol we sang, my mood began to change. By the middle of the Lukan gospel, my sense of alienation, of distance, lightened. I knew we were all family there - all Gays, all Christians, and some of us had known better circumstances than others. We were all family - the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ was born <u>again</u> in the world for me this Christmas Eve in a jail visiting room.

After the service concluded, we all talked. Jay, awaiting extradition to Oklahoma on murder and bank robbery charges, another young man accused of murder, and the other 15 prisoners talked excitedly with us. I was again spending time with the family this Christmas. We were in that room for various reasons - some could not leave as easily a I when I emerged from the jail that night - but I began to know why I was in the student clergy internship. I felt somewhat renewed seeing the Christ within all who had been in that room and I felt the Christ within me nudging me towards a tomorrow where I would be more solid in my faith.

Later, at the midnight service at the church I knew I was in the right place. A little more secure, a little less needy, and my heart and hands open to the world. The loving humanity of God in Christ had been substantiated for me in that jail room. I know now I do not need to decide whether to become a poet or a preacher - Christ will help me to integrate my two worlds of poetry and the church.

The next day, when I got home from a free meal, I was in a thoughtful mood. I realized the distance I'd previously encountered was gone. Healed. This must be the beginning of the total personal integration that Christ has for all of us. And I know I'm in the right place. Student clergy, Housewife, and welfare mother who has emerged as a Christian Lesbian who dares to call herself a poet, and past that, dares to call herself a minister of Christ.

Editors note: Sheila has decided to apply for licensing this year.

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or job, only to have the person sent back because "they just didn't fit in." At this point, some agencies will no longer deal with the firm and as stated earlier some companies have extremely strong anti-discrimination policies. Greed usually wins out, however, and the agency sends a white applicant with the same or even fewer skills, who usually gets the job. From that point, the agency will not send minority candidates to that firm, but will continue doing business with them.

All of this discrimination happen in quiet conversation, nothing is provable in a court of law because there are few records. In one firm information on applicant's race, sex, class, sexual orientation, age, etc. was written on the records in pencil so it could be erased if officials ever investigated, which does happen occasionally. The information was written in code: "lisps," "a bit different" or "rather masculine" for Gays and Lesbians, "has an accent" for Hispanics, "does not speak well" (read-like a white person) for Blacks; "a bit mature" for older persons, etc.

Many employment agencies act as a shield for employers who wish to discriminate. Men and women alike, young and old alike. Third World peoples and Gays/Lesbians are kept out of good paying jobs by the methods described above. By exposing these covert practices perhaps we will learn to protect ourselves from discrimination and glean an understanding of these policies so that we can begin to work on change in attitudes in our own workplaces. That fundamental change is necessary if Equal Opportunity is to become a reality instead of a myth.

NEXT MONTH:
PART II
"The discriminating Job Hunter"

Metropolitan Community Church of Philadelphia celebrated 3rd World Sunday with Sandi Robinson, member of MCC Columbus, Ohio and co-Director of Ecumenical Relations in UFMCC, as guest preacher. The evening before, the congregation instituted its Patron of Human Dignity Award, which was given to local TV Personality, Edie Huggins. As a denominational official, Sandi presented the award on behalf of the congregation. The presentation was made at an awards banquet attended by members of the congregation and some 50 community leaders from the Gay and Lesbian religious and secular communities. Darlene Garner (not shown), new Board member of the congregation, served as Chair.

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people have families too and they might like to occasionally spend a Christmas with their family without the responsibility of preparing for the church's Christmas. This can be accomplished by giving every third Christmas off beginning with the third Christmas after employment begins. Christmas in years three, six, nine, fifteen, etc. of employment, would be off for pastor and pastoral staff. Not all would be off at once and the beginning point for each staff would be juggled in relation to when the pastor will be off. At least a week of this paid time off is in addition to any regular paid vacation. A bonus every third year.

In closing, keep in mind that even unpaid pastoral staff--assistant, associates, student clergy, etc.--deserve this same kind of specified time off. If they are not paid for work then they would not be paid for this time off. Consider, however, that the church can give them a cash gift to make a vacation more enjoyable, or a retreat possible, or to help pay medical expenses, etc.

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1985

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ACTIVITIES FOR BOTH DELEGATES AND NON-DELEGATES

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